Background and Drill

Drill students on the gods that they know already from "The Friends and Foes of Homer’s Iliad."

Students do not need to know the loyalties at this point. Instead they should understand that some remain, and some loyalties have changed. There are two gods who are most prominent in this epic: Poseidon and Athene. The fact to remember throughout the work is that Athene loves and aids Odysseus in any way she can, while Poseidon wants to put Odysseus through a meat grinder. The reason for Poseidon’s anger is explained in the first chapter, though the macabre details are saved for Odysseus’ narration in Book 9.

Notice that the Essay/Assignment is meant to be completed at the beginning of class once the class has read Homer’s introductory plea for the Muse’s inspiration in the first paragraph. This follows the same model as the essay assignment at the beginning (and end) of the Iliad.

The Odyssey does not pick up where the Iliad left off. The Iliad ends with the ongoing Trojan War in its tenth and final year. The Odyssey begins with the ongoing journey of Odysseus to Ithaca in its tenth and final year. The Odyssey does introduce questions about the fate of Odysseus which are not answered (this is true mainly for the fate which the dead prophet Teiresias tells Odysseus about in the Underworld—his predicted wanderings AFTER killing the suitors); however, this epic probably reads more like the type of narrative whole that modern readers are accustomed to than the Iliad does.

The most surprising literary decision of Homer is the absence of Odysseus. He will not show up in the Odyssey until Book 5, where we will find him crying on the seashore on the far-flung island Ogygia.

Discussion Help

Today’s discussion is an opinion question. It is good to notice, though, that the first four books of the Odyssey are filled with generous references to Odysseus. It certainly serves to build the anticipation around his now-imminent return. In fact, the hearer is persuaded by Homer that Odysseus can and will rectify all the injustices which have transpired in his twenty years of absence.
5. What specific instructions did the disguised visitor give to Telemachus?

   Athenae told Telemachus to call the Achaeans in assembly and bid the suitors leave. sending Penelope back to her father, if needed. Then Telemachus should go in quest of his father to Nestor or Priam and Menelaus at Sparta. If his father was alive, he should wait twelve months. If he was dead, he should build a barrow for him. Either way, he should plan on killing the suitors.

6. Antinous said, "The gods seem to have given you a lesson in rhetoric and tall talking." To whom was he saying this? Why? Antinous said this to Telemachus because he had challenged the suitors openly and demanded that they leave his house.

7. Who was Euryclis? Euryclis was Odysseus' childhood nurse who still served in his house.

8. Who was Laertes? Laertes was the father of Odysseus and former king of Ithaca.

Quotations:

   - "Tell me, O Muse, of that ingenious hero who traveled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations whose manners and customs he was acquainted, moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but what he might or could not have done, for they punished through their own enmity or folly in curing the circle of the Sun-god Hyperion, or the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things; I daughter of Zeus, from whatsoever source you may know them." — Homer's appeal to the Muse

   - "If Odysseus is the man he then was, these suitors will here a short shrift and a sorry ending." — Athena disguised as Mentor to Telemachus

   - "But there! It rests with heaven to determine whether he is to return, and take his revenge in his own house or not; I would, however, urge you to not about trying to get rid of these suitors at once." — Athena as Mentor

   - "You are a fine, smart-looking fellow, show your mettle, then, and make yourself a name in story." — Athena as Mentor

Discussion Questions:

1. The Odyssey begins with Telemachus, not Odysseus. In your opinion, why is this?

   Book 1: That Ingenious Hero

Teacher Guide

Questions to Mark for Test:

Students should mark the following items in their study guides, which they will be responsible for on their test (Remind students to clearly circle the ID, Question #, and Quotation bullet point):

**Identifications:**

Hyperion; Calypso; Orestes; Polyphemus; Antinous; Eurymachus

**Comprehension Questions:**

Numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

*Test Note: Students should study Questions 3, 7, and 8 as Identifications; they should know how to spell these and be able to give them as answers in the first section of their test.*

**Quotations:**

"Tell me ... of that ingenious hero ..."

— Homer to the Muse

"If Odysseus is the man ..."

— Athena disguised as Mentor to Telemachus

**Teacher Notes**

**Memorization Note:** Students are to memorize the opening lines of the Odyssey. See Teacher Notes in Book 3.

**Resource Note:** Samuel Butler’s translation of the Odyssey has an excellent introductory list of all the important characters and places in the epic. He helpfully divides character by type or place. It might be good to have students study these for a quiz or to print them for students to keep for reference in their notebooks. Many (but not all) of them will be covered in the study guide.

Shipping terms are also covered in the Appendix in the back of this guide. It is meant to serve as a go-to when you are trying to understand some reference during the sailing adventures.

**Essays and Assignments**

Have all students compare the introductory lines of the Iliad to those of the Odyssey. Have them write a page anticipating what the differences will be between the two epics. This can be formulated similarly to the summary assignment at the beginning of the Iliad. Anticipation is a good (though not essential) help to getting into an epic. Assign this essay IMMEDIATELY upon reading the first paragraph of the work. As before, collect the assignments when completed to be passed out upon writing a similar essay at the end of the Odyssey.
Background and Drill

Drill students on the Identifications, Comprehension Questions, and Quotations from Book 1.

It is very clear from the outset that Telemachus has a strained relationship with his father. The main problem for Telemachus is that he has no memory of his father, as he was an infant when Odysseus left for Troy. When speaking of Odysseus to Athene/Mentes in Book 1, Telemachus says, “my mother tells me I am son to Odysseus,” and again refers to him as “he who they tell me is my father.” The speech in Book 2 is a telling addition to this vein of thought. In his speech to the Ithacans, Telemachus says that yes, he has lost his father, but more importantly, he is besieged by suitors who eat up his inheritance and pester his mother to marry.

Discussion Help

Similarities:

• Diomed notes that Athene favors Odysseus when he chooses him for the spying mission against the Trojans. Odysseus is still Athene’s favorite, as she openly declares to her father, Zeus. Moreover, Athene is willing to do all the footwork necessary to bring Odysseus back from his desert island with the witch-goddess Calypso. She defies even Poseidon for her Odysseus.

• Telemachus’ speech before the elders of Ithaca is highly reminiscent of the speeches of various leaders before the Achaeans at Troy.

• Athene’s words in the guise of Mentor are highly characteristic of Homer’s emphasis on the decline over time. Old men, at least, think that young men are worse than their fathers. “Young men’s minds are light as air.”

Differences:

• The story has in some ways shrunk in scope, as it is now primarily concerned with the fate of one man, Odysseus, and, to a lesser degree, the fate of his household.

• The Iliad is about a city besieged. The Odyssey is about a family besieged.

• The Iliad is about an ongoing war. The Odyssey is about the long journey home.

• Telemachus’ speech before the elders sets up a young man pleading with and instructing his elders, something very rare in the Iliad, especially for one who is unproven like Telemachus.
Questions to Mark for Test:
Students should mark the following items in their study guides, which they will be responsible for on their test (Remind students to clearly circle the ID, Question #, and Quotation bullet point):

Identifications:
Icarius

Comprehension Questions:
Numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8

Quotations:
“Sons are seldom ...”
— Athene disguised as Mentor to Telemachus

Teacher Notes

Test Note: Remind students of the timing of the Odyssey tests. There will be a test over the highlighted material from Books 1-10. The next test will include all material on the previous test AND all the new highlighted material from Books 11-18. The Odyssey final exam will include all material on the Books 1-18 test and the highlighted material from Books 19-24.

Remind students that there will be periodic pop quizzes on the new highlighted material from the Odyssey. This WILL NOT include information from the Iliad. The Iliad exam finished that portion of the course.

Remind students that their memory assignment can be quizzed on any day from this point forward. If students are absent on the day it is assigned, they will complete it on their first day back to school.

Essays and Assignments

Memory Assignment: Remind students to be working on the upcoming memory assignment from Book 1.

Essay: Have students write an essay defending the actions of Telemachus. Why are Telemachus' actions the best possible in his situation? In what ways are his insecurities merely a result of growing up without his father?

Once they have written a paragraph defending Telemachus, have the students write a second paragraph from the perspective of Telemachus. This can be structured as a journal entry from the night before, speaking to the Ithacans and suitors. Telemachus has been escorted to the tower by his old nurse, Euryclea. Now he cannot sleep, having spoken to the goddess Athene. What is he thinking?